

Title: Abandoned Family Cemetery in Humiston Woods

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Humiston Woods is a beautiful 336-acre nature preserve located northwest of Pontiac. It includes a small and abandoned family cemetery west of the Vermilion River.

This small cemetery has two or three marked graves. It is about 0.8 miles west of the east border of Section 36 in Amity Township in Livingston County. The legal land description for the cemetery would be in the west one-half of the southwest quarter of Section 36. Ephraim Manley originally purchased this land from the U.S. Government in 1839.

In 1854, Apollo Camp bought the land adjacent to the east, which would be the northeast quarter of the southwest quarter of Section 36.

By the time the 1893 Livingston County Atlas was prepared, B. Humiston owned all 640 acres in Section 36 of Amity Township. When the 1911 Livingston County Atlas was made, Harriet Humiston owned Section 36. Today, this land is owned by the Humiston Trust.

The oldest burial in this little cemetery is for Eliza B. "Libbie" Robinson, who was buried in 1862. The story of this family began with the birth of George Robinson in New York in 1801. Around 1837, George Robinson married Sylvia Cook. George was 36, and Sylvia was 25 when they married. George and Sylvia Robinson had six children. Their oldest child, Lyman Robinson, was born in Pennsylvania in 1837.

In the 1850 Census, the George Robinson family had moved to Livingston County. Their son, Lyman Robinson, was 13. There were five children in the household.

In the 1860 Census, the George Robinson family lived in Amity Township, and their Post Office was in Rooks Creek. George was 57, and his wife Sylvia was 47. In this Census, son Ephraim was 11, and son Lyman was 23.

Lyman Robinson married Eliza B. "Libbie" Calkins in Livingston County in 1860. When they married, Lyman was 23, and Libbie was 16. One year later, their daughter Ida May Robinson was born.

Unfortunately, Libbie Robinson died in 1862 at the age of 18. She was buried in the cemetery that is now part of Humiston Woods. Lyman Robinson then had to care for his infant daughter, Ida Robinson. Four years after his wife died, Lyman Robinson married Rebecca Isabel Pembroke (1848-1935) in LaSalle. Lyman was 29, and Rebecca was 18 when they married. Lyman and Rebecca Robinson had eight children.

When the 1870 Census was conducted, Sylvia Robinson, George Robinson's wife, had apparently died. George was 70 years old and living with his 33-year-old daughter Maria Robinson in Rooks Creek. In this Census, Lyman and Rebecca Robinson also lived in

Rooks Creek. Eight-year-old Ida Robinson lived with them, as did daughters Nellie and Irene.

In the 1880 Census, Lyman and Rebecca Robinson still lived in Rooks Creek. Ida Robinson was not living with them at that time. Five children of Lyman and Rebecca Robinson lived in the household.

In 1883, George Robinson died at age 82. His burial location is unknown at this time. One year after his father's death, Lyman Robinson and his family moved to Lyons, Nebraska.

Ida May Robinson married Frank A. Church in 1885. Frank was 27, and Ida was 24 when they married. They had five girls. After they married, they moved to South Dakota.

In 1895, Lyman Robinson died in Thurston, Nebraska, at the age of 58. In 1900, Frank and Ida Church moved back to Pontiac after living in South Dakota. Ida died in Pontiac in 1932 at the age of 70, and her husband, Frank Church, died in Pontiac in 1936 at the age of 77.

A second burial in the cemetery in Humiston Woods dates back to the 1871 burial of seven-year-old Jemima Swihart. The Swihart family story began with the birth of Jonathan H. Swihart Jr. in Ohio in 1840. Jonathan Swihart Sr. (1807-1850) and Elizabeth Tombaugh (1813-1878) were his parents.

In about 1860, Jonathan Swihart Jr. married Mary Schillinger (1839-1909) in Indiana. Her parents were John Jacob Schillinger (1804-1842) and Julia Ann Sponseller (1810-1886). Jonathan was 20, and Mary was 21 when they married. They had eight children.

In the 1870 Census, Jonathan was 29 and his wife Mary was 30. They lived in Amity Township, and he farmed. Their three daughters living at home included Sophia, age eight, Jemima, age six, and Anna, age four.

Unfortunately, Jemima Swihart died in 1871 when she was eight years old. Her family buried her in the little cemetery in Humiston Woods. By the 1880 Census, the Jonathan Swihart family had moved from Amity Township to Bourbon, Indiana. Mary Swihart died in 1909 in Indiana at the age of 70. Her husband, Jonathan Swihart, died in Indiana in 1923 at the age of 82.

In the late 1970s, Mary Peterson Erickson and a group of volunteers visited every cemetery in Livingston County. They wrote down the information inscribed on each gravestone. They then published a two-volume set of books titled Livingston County Cemetery Records. In this book, Mary Erickson assigned the name of the Pennington Farm Cemetery to this little cemetery in Humiston Woods. Mary Erickson noted that the little cemetery was on the site of the old Pennington farm. This cemetery name was added to the Find Grave website, which has cemetery burial information for all cemeteries.

There is possibly a third burial in this small cemetery. Unfortunately, only the last name of Robinson can be read on the stone. The lettering on this stone is almost completely gone. Further investigation may determine if this is a gravestone for a third burial.

For the two known burials in this cemetery, both of the families later moved out of Illinois after the deaths occurred. Their graves have been mainly forgotten to the sands of time.